

MEDIA, PA—On March 13, 2009, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) met with Jane Hileman, the CEO and Founder of the American Reading Company in King of Prussia, Pa., to discuss the organization's 100 Book Challenge to encourage kids to read. Congressman Sestak, a member of the Education and Labor Committee and the Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Subcommittee, has worked hard to increase funding for schools and to support innovative educational programs.

"As a nation, everything we do now—whether it's investments in economy, health care, the environment, or national security—will not be effective unless we give our children the educational tools they need to prosper and become effective leaders in the future," said Congressman Sestak. "I will continue to work hard for increased funding for our schools and will support innovative educational programs so that our children will have the knowledge and skills they need to compete in a global economy."

The 100 Book Challenge reading program was first used in a suburban Philadelphia school district where Ms. Hileman was working as a reading specialist. She challenged a group of second-graders with kindergarten-level reading abilities to read 100 books. The kids read hundreds of books while Ms. Hileman and her colleagues used daily conferencing and assessment sessions to coach individuals and ensure the shared curriculum met the needs of all the students. Parents were coached on how to establish the home routines essential to long-term academic success. By giving them the choice to read books leveled to their abilities, the students experienced success with reading and were encouraged to read more. She also offered them inexpensive prizes as incentives for reading a certain number of books. Even the most reluctant of students got hooked on reading through Ms. Hileman's 100 Book Challenge, and soon, all the second-graders had improved their reading scores.

Currently, more than 100 people from a wide variety of backgrounds work for American Reading Company in King of Prussia. Former educators, customers, vendors, and parents are on staff to help develop programs, provide support, and offer training to the schools that implement American Reading Company programs.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's*

*anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the “Global War on Terrorism.” He served as President Clinton’s Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.*

###